



Motoring after an amputation

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This booklet is for people who've had an amputation and outlines some of the key things to consider when choosing or adapting a car. Information in this booklet comes from consultation with people who've had amputations and other experts. Price information comes from our market research – use it as a guide only and shop around for the best price.

In this booklet we give information on:

- how your amputation may affect your driving and the rules about driving with a disability
- useful features on standard cars and specialist products and techniques
- sources of funding and expert advice, including addresses.

More detailed information on choosing and using a car can be found in the Rica guides shown here. All our guides are free – contact us for a copy or read them on our website.

020 7427 2463

www.rica.org.uk

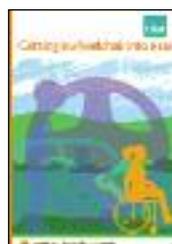
The website also has the **Find a car** database of car measurements that will help you find a car to suit you.



Choosing a car

Details of features that may help you and ways of adapting a car

Car controls
Information on types of adaptations and how to get them



Getting a wheelchair into a car

Information on equipment to help you stow or carry a wheelchair

Getting in and out of a car
Techniques that may help and details of equipment that is available



Wheelchair accessible vehicles

Information on converted vehicles to carry you in your wheelchair

Mobility address list
Addresses of all adaptation suppliers and car converters in the UK and details of the services they offer



Driving after an amputation

If you're learning to drive or returning to driving after an amputation, you must tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). They'll assess your fitness to drive using the information you provide and may ask you to have a medical examination or a driving assessment. You may be:

- given a full licence
- given a medical review licence, valid for one, two or three years
- given a licence to drive an automatic or a car with specialist controls (this will be coded on the licence)
- in extreme cases, refused a licence.

You can appeal if you don't agree with the DVLA's decision.

For more information on getting a driving licence, get *What you need to know about driving licences* (D100) from a post office or go to: www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions.

You must tell your insurance company about your disability and any adaptations that you use or limitations on your driving licence.

Learning to drive

If you are learning to drive or returning to driving with adaptations, you'll benefit from lessons with a specialist instructor. They use cars with adapted controls or will teach you in your own vehicle. DMUK or your Mobility Centre (see page 10 for both) can help you find an instructor locally.

Plan of action

1 Ask some basic questions

Think about what you may need in the future as well as about what suits you now. Prepare to compromise as you may not find everything in one car.

How will you get in and out? Do you need wide or high doors, or specialist equipment to help? See *Products and techniques* (page 5).

Will you be comfortable in the seat? And will you be able to reach the controls?

Will you need specialist controls? There is a big range – from simple gadgets to more complex controls (see pages 6-8).

What equipment will you carry? Think about everyday and occasional use.

Do you use a wheelchair? Will you load it into the boot or travel sitting in it? Will you need extra space or specialist equipment?

2 Collect information

Start with motoring magazines, the internet and manufacturers' brochures. You can also try the following:

Disabled Motoring UK (DMUK – see page 10) publishes a monthly magazine with reviews and articles.

Mobility Centres (see page 10) offer driving assessments and tell you what equipment may suit you. Charges vary from centre to centre – up to £130. Free in Scotland if you're referred by a GP. Free UK-wide under Motability's Managed Adaptation Programme.

Mobility Roadshows and **Motability One Big Day** (see page 11) to see and try out vehicles and adaptations.

Motability (see page 11) have a list of car dealers with specialist knowledge and facilities for disabled people. They have free guides, in print and on their website. **www.youreable.com** have an online discussion forum covering topics including benefits and motoring.

Find a car

- **Rica has an online search tool of car measurements:** www.rica.org.uk/find-a-car.
- **Search for cars with wide doors, low sills or lots of headroom or look for a boot to fit your wheelchair.**

3 Try out before buying

Try any car you're considering. Dealers may bring one to you and should be able to find an automatic version. Try getting in and out several times. If you use a wheelchair, check that it fits. You might be able to try out adapted cars at a Mobility Centre or an adaptation firm. They'll also tell you if the adaptations can be fitted to your chosen car.

4 Get plenty of practice

Make sure that you're not driving with adaptations for the first time when you collect the car. Your adapter may have a demonstration model and they must give you the chance to try your adapted car before you take it away.

Mobility Centres can help you find specialist driving instructors locally.

Choosing a car

Some people with amputations are able to drive a standard car, particularly if it has automatic transmission and power steering. Other helpful features, like height-adjustable seats, are available on a wide range of cars too. The less a car has to be modified to suit your needs, the higher its resale value.

If you're going to get a standard car, use the list below to tick the features you might find useful. Alternatively, *Products and techniques* (pages 5-8) gives an overview of the equipment that might help you.

GETTING IN AND OUT

- doors which open easily
- tall and wide door openings – doors on two- and three-door cars are usually wider
- doors with a wide opening angle
- no door sills or low, narrow sills
- conveniently placed handholds
- seat height that best suits you
- seats that go up and down and back and forwards easily – useful if you need space to get your legs in but you need to sit closer to the wheel for driving
- plenty of space around the seat.

LOCKING AND IGNITION

- remote and central locking
- keyless entry system – easier than using a key
- push button start
- windows that close automatically when you lock the car.

PRIMARY CONTROLS

For steering, braking and accelerating:

- automatic transmission – can make driving less stressful and tiring
- power assisted steering – on some cars the effort needed can be lightened by the dealership or by specialist converters
- cruise control to maintain a constant speed
- handbrakes can be difficult to operate – check that you can put them on and off
- some cars have electronic, push button handbrakes and you can have one fitted to many others.

SECONDARY CONTROLS

For things like the horn, lights and indicators – try to find a model where these are in the best position for you.

Also look for:

- electric windows
- electric and heated door mirrors
- heated windscreen
- automatic wipers
- automatic lights
- easy controls for audio equipment, air conditioning etc – some cars have controls on the steering wheel and some even have voice-activated controls
- parking sensor – sounds if you're near an obstacle
- reversing camera.

BOOT

- no sill or low sill
- powered boot opening/closing
- internal boot release
- space for your wheelchair or scooter if you use one.

Products and techniques

If your amputation means you have difficulty getting in and out and driving a standard car, there's a range of equipment and adaptations available to help. These pages, and our other guides (see page 2), give more information. You can also get individual advice from a Mobility Centre (see page 10).

If friends or family also drive your car, make sure your adaptations don't get in their way.

GETTING IN AND OUT

The best way to get in is to sit first then turn to face the front, doing the reverse to get out.

If you need it, you can have the seat runners extended to give you more space to get in and out. You can also make your existing seat higher or height-adjustable, add a swivelling mechanism or have a specialist replacement seat fitted (from £1,250). Some people use swivelling cushions (from £10). See our guide *Getting in and out of a car* for more information.

Wheelchair users

There are transfer boards and other devices to help you from a wheelchair into the seat and hoists as well as lifts to help stow your wheelchair in the car, including some where you transfer to the seat first. See our guides *Getting in and out of a car* and *Getting a wheelchair into a car* for more information.

Alternatively, you can get a wheelchair accessible vehicle, where you travel in your wheelchair (see our guide *Wheelchair accessible vehicles*).

PRIMARY CONTROLS

Steering

If you have to steer one-handed, for example if you have had one hand or arm amputated or if you have hand controls, you can fit a steering ball or spinner to the steering wheel.

Spinners come in several shapes to suit different types of grip and most cost between £10 and £110.



A range of steering wheel grips – Alfred Bekker

NHS Prosthetics services provide arm amputees with a spinner (free of charge) that hooks on to their prosthesis where this is appropriate.

When driving, an electrically powered prosthesis should be switched off and must not be clamped directly on to the steering wheel or spinner. Cosmetic hands should not be used for steering, but can be used for steadying the wheel. The fingers should not be wrapped around the wheel rim or spinner.

Changing gears

Automatic transmission means fewer gear changes and also helps with pulling away if you have hill start assist.

Usually automatics have a mechanical gear selector, which you operate with your left hand. If you can't do this, you can have an electronic

system fitted, but these can be expensive. Take advice from a Mobility Centre before investing in one of these systems.



Electronic gear selector – Adaptacar

Some manual cars have automated gear systems which work without using a clutch pedal. You move a lever or use push buttons or paddles on the steering wheel to select a gear.



Gear controls on steering wheel

If you can operate the gear stick, but not the clutch pedal, you can adapt the gear stick of a manual car so you don't have to use the clutch pedal to change gear (from £2,000).



Gear stick mounted Duck clutch – from Guido Simplex

Accelerating and braking

Left foot accelerator

If you have the use of one foot, you may be able to drive an unadapted automatic car. If it is your left foot, one option is to fit an accelerator on the left side of the brake pedal, from £400. So that other people can drive the car, these are removable or made so that you can flip the other pedal down.



Removable left foot accelerator – Brig Ayd



Flip-up left foot accelerator – Jeff Gosling

Warning

- **Left foot accelerators take a lot of getting used to, especially if you are used to driving an unadapted manual car. There have been a number of accidents involving drivers who aren't used to them.**
- **You must have a professional driving assessment before ordering a left foot accelerator and lessons with a qualified instructor before you start to use one on the road.**

Hand controls

Not everybody is able to drive with pedals. Even if you have the use of one foot or prosthetic leg, you may need to consider driving with hand controls. People have told us they had problems with pedals because of:

- lack of sensitivity in legs or prosthetics (they found it difficult to control the pedal or risked jamming their foot under it without realising)
- pain in legs or stumps
- fatigue, especially on long journeys.

For these reasons many people find hand controls easier to use.

There are a few different types of hand control. They can be powered and the amount of force you need to operate them can be adjusted. You can fit a footrest, shaped to suit you (from £75), and a guard to stop your feet interfering with the pedals (from £100). See our *Car controls* guide for more information and advice.

Tips

Advice from disabled drivers:

- **Think about what you may need in the future as well as about what suits you now.**
- **Get an assessment or test drive a new car when you're at your least able – eg at the end of the day when you feel tired.**
- **Make sure you get what you know you need and want and not what others think you should have.**
- **See as many controls as you possibly can.**



Single lever accelerator and brake – here fitted with optional indicator switch – Jeff Gosling

Combined controls

- steering column mounted – push the lever to brake and pull it towards you to accelerate (from £360)
- a radial lever that you use clockwise to accelerate and push away to brake (from £700)
- floor-mounted push-pull levers – position and strength needed can be adjusted to suit you (from £800)



Floor-mounted Menox Carospeed – Autoadapt

- clamp on controls simply bolt on to the pedals (£350) – best as a short term option.

Separate accelerators and brakes

- there's a wider range of separate hand controls for accelerating; use with floor-mounted brakes (from £550)
- accelerator rings (from £1,800) need less effort and let you steer with both hands on the wheel; they don't interfere with the steering wheel adjustment.



K5 under ring – Autoadapt

Parking brake

Mechanical attachments can make it easier to use the handbrake (from £70). Electronic parking brakes cost from around £700.

SECONDARY CONTROLS

If you have difficulty using controls for the lights and indicators, there are simple and complex solutions.

If you need to work the indicator with your right hand, you can have an extension fitted to the indicator stalk that takes it over the steering column.



Indicators extension – Alfred Bekker

If you have more complex needs, electronic systems can be fitted that bring all the secondary controls together in one unit. They are operated by hand or by nudging with your head or something else. Some work with just one button.

Prices vary widely depending on how complex the controls are and on the wiring system of the car (from £700).



Steering knob combined with wireless secondary controls – Autoadapt

Double check

- Check the cost of any adaptation before ordering it.
- Check with the installer that it is compatible with your car before ordering the car.

OTHER WAYS OF DRIVING

Nearly all controls can be altered or adapted to suit you and complete systems built around you if necessary. You will need a thorough assessment at a Mobility Centre and specialist instruction for systems that involve driving in a very different way.

Finance

Motability – Car leasing scheme for people receiving the Higher Rate Mobility Component of DLA or PIP, War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement or AFIP (see page 11 for more information).

Access to Work – May help if you're working or about to start work. Go to www.gov.uk/access-to-work or ask at your Jobcentre. Tel: 0345 268 8499, Textphone: 0345 608 8753

Charities – To find one that may help try:

- Charity Search – provides a free service for people over 50, to help find a grant-giving charity
Tel: 0117 982 4060 (9am-2.30pm)
www.charitysearch.org.uk
- Turn2Us – a website for people in financial need: www.turn2us.org.uk
- contacting local support groups (see pages 10-11)
- your library for local charities such as the Round Table or the Rotary or Lions Clubs.

VAT exemption on adaptations – You don't have to pay VAT on adaptations, or on installation, repairs or maintenance.

VAT exemption on a new car – You may not have to pay VAT on the purchase and maintenance of an adapted car. Information from HM Revenue and Customs (see page 11).

Vehicle Excise Duty (Road Tax) – You don't have to pay this if you get the Higher Rate Mobility Component of DLA or PIP, War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement or AFIP. You can claim disability exemption when you apply for vehicle tax
www.gov.uk/vehicle-exempt-from-vehicle-tax

Car insurance – Under the Equality Act 2010, insurers are not allowed to refuse disabled drivers insurance or charge extra without justifying evidence. Shop around for the best deal. Mobility Centres and organisations of disabled motorists (see pages 10-11) have lists of companies that specialise in insurance for disabled drivers.

Blue Badge Scheme

Allows disabled people to park in restricted areas. The rules are different in different places so do read and follow the conditions of use carefully. The scheme is administered by local authorities who deal with applications and issue badges. Contact your local authority for more information or phone: 0844 463 0213 (England) 0844 463 0214 (Scotland) 0844 463 0215 (Wales) blue.badge@northgate-is.com www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge

BLESMA (British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association)

- help and advice for ex-servicemen and women who have lost the use of their limbs or eyes, and their dependants.
- Tel: 020 8590 1124
Email: ChadwellHeath@blesma.org
www.blesma.org

Demand

- national charity that designs and makes specialist equipment for disabled people
 - carries out maintenance and repairs on specialist equipment
 - online shop selling new and second hand specialist sporting and mobility equipment.
- Tel: 01923 681 800
Email: info@demand.org.uk
demandequipment.com

Disability Benefits Helpline

- government information service.
- Tel: 03457 123456 (DLA)
03458 503322 (PIP)
www.gov.uk/disability-benefits-helpline

Disabled Living Foundation

- advice and information on equipment and services for disabled people
 - training for professionals.
- Tel: 0300 999 0004 (10am-4pm)
www.dlf.org.uk
www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk

Disabled Motoring UK

- the campaigning charity for disabled motorists. They run the Baywatch campaign against parking abuse and represent disabled people's needs at a national level. Membership £24 per year – includes monthly magazine.

The Street
Ashwellthorpe
NR16 1EX
Tel: 01508 489449
Fax: 01508 488173
Email: info@disabledmotoring.org
www.disabledmotoring.org

DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency)

Drivers Medical Group
Tel: 0300 790 6806
Fax: 0845 850 0095
Email: eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions

Driver & Vehicle Agency (Northern Ireland)

Driver Licensing Medical Section
Tel: 0845 402 4000
Email: dva@doeni.gov.uk
www.dvani.gov.uk

Forum of Mobility Centres

- a network of independent, accredited Mobility Centres which will: assess your driving and give you advice about how to make it safer, easier and more comfortable; give advice to carers; in some cases, help you find a specialist driving instructor
- national information service on driving, specialist equipment and vehicle adaptations.

Freephone: 0800 559 3636

www.mobility-centres.org.uk

HM Revenue and Customs

- VAT relief on adaptations (VAT Notice 701/7) and motor vehicles (VAT Notice 701/59) for disabled people.

Tel: 0300 123 1073

www.gov.uk/hmrc

Limbless Association

- help and advice for limbless people and their carers; national volunteer visitor network and limb loss legal panel.

Tel: 0800 644 0185

Email: enquiries@limbless-association.org

www.limbless-association.org

The Mobility Roadshow

- free events with advice, demonstrations and test drives on cars and mobility products and services
- includes **Get Going Live**, the event for young disabled motorists, where you can test drive cars and controls from the age of 15.

Email: info@mobilityroadshow.co.uk

www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk

Motability

- Use Higher/Enhanced Rate Mobility Component of DLA, PIP or AFIP or your War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement to lease a car.
- Maintenance and servicing, insurance and breakdown assistance are included. Motability contribute towards the cost of adaptations.
- You may have to make an advance payment to cover the cost of the car.
- Motability have useful information, including videos on choosing a car and driving adaptations on their website.

Tel: 0300 456 4566

Textphone: 0300 037 0100

www.motability.co.uk

One Big Day/Big Event

- Motability run these regional events for customers and people interested in the scheme – you can see and test drive cars and adaptations.

Tel: 0300 456 4566

www.motabilityevents.co.uk

Remap

- voluntary group of engineers who design and make specialist equipment for disabled people.

In England and Wales

Tel: 01732 760209

Email: data@remap.org.uk

www.remap.org.uk

In Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9086 4251

Email: victor.cole@remapni.org

www.remapni.org

In Scotland

Tel: 01466 730736

Email: remap-scotland@btconnect.com

www.remap-scotland.org



Consumer research for older and disabled people.

Rica is an independent charity that publishes information on products and services for older and disabled people.

Tel: 020 7427 2460
Email: mail@rica.org.uk
www.rica.org.uk



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The information in this guide is correct at the time of going to print (April 2016). It is reviewed every two years. See our website for any changes since printing.



ISBN: 978-1-907408-33-5
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In partnership with:



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Funded by:

